

Mexican Restaurant Fiesta: Say Adios to Sodium and Fat

Mexican Restaurant Food Nutrition Comparison

As with all *EN* comparisons, this is only a sampling of what's available. Products are listed alphabetically.

✓ = **EN's Picks.** Sides & Appetizers contain ≤200 calories (10% DV), 8 g fat (12% DV), 2 g saturated fat (9% DV), and 300 mg sodium (13% DV). Entrées contain ≤600 calories (30% DV), 20 g fat (30% DV), 8 g saturated fat (36% DV), and 700 mg sodium (29% DV).

Mexican Restaurant Food	Serv Size	Calories	Fat (g)	Sat Fat (g)	Sodium (mg)	Carb (g)	Fiber (g)	Pro (g)
FULL SERVICE RESTAURANTS—APPETIZERS/SIDES								
Chevy's Fresh Mex Bowl of Homemade Tortilla Soup	1 bowl	390	17	3.5	1200	35	7	26
Don Pablo's Taquitos	6 pc	627	45	21	1272	27	3	24
On the Border Chicken Grande Fajita Nachos	1*	1390	77	41	4210	82	16	102
Don Pablo's Mesquite Grilled Chicken Quesadilla, small	4 sl	826	50	24	1412	62	2	32
FULL SERVICE RESTAURANTS—ENTREES								
Chevy's Fresh Mex Carnitas Enchilada	1*	300	21	14	590	17	2	22
Chevy's Fresh Mex Grilled Fresh Fish Tacos	1*	1060	39	10	2910	125	16	50
Chevy's Fresh Mex Mixed Grill Sizzling Fajitas	1*	1533	87	35	3327	103	19	83
Don Pablo's Mexican Restaurant Beef Taco Salad w/shell	1*	1380	73	32	2593	102	18	79
✓ Don Pablo's Pecos Valley Veggie Fajita	1*	334	20	3	315	39	8	7
Don Pablo's Spicy Beef & Bean Burrito	1*	1285	68	30	2000	97	12	8
On the Border Crispy Chicken Taco Melt	1*	730	35	13	1640	73	5	33
On the Border Grilled Veg with Portobello Mushroom Fajita	1*	230	15	1	620	25	4	4
On the Border Classic Ground Beef Chimichanga without sauce	1*	1420	90	29	2440	105	6	47
Pepe's Mexican Restaurant Chicken & Bean Burrito	228 g	480	21	6	870	51	9	22
✓ Pepe's Mexican Pork Taco Crisp	135 g	170	6	2.5	390	16	3	13
✓ Pepe's Pork Taco Soft Flour	145 g	220	7	3	510	24	3	15
FAST CASUAL RESTAURANTS—APPETIZERS/SIDES								
Baja Fresh Cheese Nachos	782 g	1890	108	40	2530	163	31	63
Baja Fresh Chips & Guacamole	425 g	1340	83	8	950	141	20	21
El Pollo Loco Chicken Taquito with Avocado Salsa	1*	230	12	2.5	590	20	2	10
✓ El Pollo Loco House Salsa	42 g	10	0	0	160	2	0	0
✓ El Pollo Loco Tortilla Chips	36 g	70	8	1	250	23	2	2
Moe's Southwest Grill John Coctosan Chicken Quesadilla	1*	814	39	20.3	1541	58	15	54
Taco Bell Pintos & Cheese	128 g	170	6	2.5	750	19	9	10
Taco John's Mexican Rice	170 g	250	6	0	1080	45	0	5
FAST CASUAL RESTAURANTS—ENTREES								
Baja Fresh Carnitas Burrito Ultimo	480 g	920	44	21	2330	86	9	46
✓ Baja Chicken Original Baja Taco	116 g	210	5	1	230	28	2	12
✓ Baja Fresh Steak Americano Soft Taco	142 g	260	13	6	640	21	2	15
✓ El Pollo Loco Crunchy Chicken Taco	95 g	190	8	2.5	480	16	2	12
El Pollo Loco Twice Grilled Burrito	406 g	800	40	17	1730	44	3	64
Moe's Southwest Grill Chicken Homewrecker	1*	935	36	16.3	1686	97	14	53
Moe's Southwest Grill Grilled Chicken Rice Bowl	1*	854	42	11.8	1314	77	12	46
Moe's Southwest Grill Ground Beef Homewrecker Jr.	1*	498	20	8.6	993	55	7	22
✓ Moe's Southwest Grill Unanimous Decision Soft Tortilla Taco	1*	333	14	5.8	677	40	7	14
Taco Bell Beef Burrito Supreme	248 g	420	15	6	1260	53	9	17
✓ Taco Bell Fresco Chicken Soft Taco	135 g	170	4	1	680	22	3	12
Taco Bell Grilled Chicken Burrito	177 g	430	18	5	1160	49	3	18
✓ Taco Bell Steak Gordita Supreme	153 g	270	11	4	550	29	2	14
Taco John's Bean Burrito	187 g	360	9	3	790	56	9	14
Taco John's Chicken Grilled Burrito	247 g	580	28	10	1620	52	6	30
✓ Taco John's Crispy Taco	92 g	180	10	3.5	270	13	2	9

Note: * = 1 portion, as served by restaurant, no specific serving size is available. pc=piece, sl=slice, g=gram, mg=milligram, sat fat=saturated fat, carb=carbohydrates, pro=protein, DV=Daily Value, daily requirement based on 2,000 calorie/day diet. Source: restaurant websites.

Mexican restaurants sure draw a crowd: Colorful decorations, fun music and, of course, delicious food—what's not to like? In fact, Mexican foods, from tacos to enchiladas, are so popular that they've even entered the realm of American comfort food. But is this spicy, often cheesy fare wreaking havoc with our waistlines, and cholesterol and blood pressure levels?

Traditional Mexican food can be quite healthy (See *EN* August 2010, "The Vibrant, Healthy Flavors of an Authentic Latin Diet."). Key foods include fresh salsas, beans, rice, fresh corn tortillas, fresh cheese, and more. But once we Americans put our personal twist on it, we end up with deep-fried dishes like chimichangas and fried tacos, processed sauces, and globs of oozy cheese. The key to keeping your healthy eating in check while turning up the heat on your dinner is to keep it simple—choose as many fresh, whole foods, such as black beans, rice, lettuce, tomatoes, corn and chicken, as possible.

Helpful hints. For your Cinco de Mayo celebrations—now or anytime of the year—here are a few menu pointers.

- **Rethink the appetizer.** Consider skipping this pre-meal filler-upper if you're dining alone or with a small group. Even divided in half or more, many of these selections provide a meal's worth or more of calories, fat and sodium. And, remember, there's still a whole meal coming after you chow down on one of these.
- **Look for the veggies.** Many Mexican restaurants offer veggie-filled options, which tend to be lower in calories, fat and sodium and will still give you the Latin flavor you crave.
- **Keep it simple and fresh.** Think fresh tomato salsas, tacos with simple fillings, grilled fish or chicken, and the like. Forget layers of gooey cheese and sauce on top of fried tortillas, which raise the calories and fat.
- **Taco talk.** Don't make assumptions about which menu item is a healthier choice; looks can be deceiving. Sometimes soft tacos and tostadas can be deceptively high in calories, fat and sodium. It's worth getting the nutrition facts before you order. **EN**

—Heidi McIndoo, M.S., R.D.